**Community Organizations Strongly Support Addictions Service Changes**

**North Bay, ON – Jan. 7, 2020** – The Mayor’s Roundtable on Mental Health and Addictions is stressing the importance of upcoming changes to addictions services and why these changes are critical for our community.

The reallocation of services will allow us to provide a greater, much-needed complement of addiction services to our community.

Residential treatment, while an effective program for those who require it, is not the best treatment for everyone. It is a difficult program for the majority of the population to access. As a minimum, it requires individuals to have plans for up to six months, for child care, a leave of absence from their employer, and a method to continue to pay rent and/or their mortgage while not employed. These barriers alone make residential treatment inaccessible for most citizens. No individual struggling with addictions should feel they need to have all these items in place in order to access treatment.

Many people on waitlists for residential treatment services could be treated through addictions day/evening programs, and the introduction of this program will help individuals get the care they need without being away from home for six months. It is important to not underestimate the crucial role and effectiveness of addictions day/evening programs, which greatly increase and encourages accessibility for those who live in the community. Residential treatment is still an important component of addictions services, and our community will continue to have a 22-bed residential treatment program through the North Bay Recovery Home.

“Many individuals on the waitlist at the North Bay Recovery Home could be served by an addictions day/evening program,” reports Wendy Prieur, Executive Director at the North Bay Recovery Home. “This in turns frees up our facility to provide residential treatment to those who need it.”

These changes have been led by community organizations which had a unique opportunity to participate in a ground-breaking study to examine the current services in the community. The study highlighted how the City of North Bay had a surplus of residential treatment beds and how a lack of other services has serious consequences for our community. Community partners feel strongly there is a moral obligation to provide the proper programming for the city.

For example, the current lack of community-based withdrawal management services (WMS) beds leaves individuals and their families feeling helpless and puts them at the risk of tragic outcomes. These individuals are not receiving the right care, in the right place at the right time.

Jennifer Farrell, an Addiction Peer Support Worker at a local addictions clinic states “the lack of community WMS beds is a serious gap. I work with people every day that need to be able to withdraw safety in order to begin seeking treatment, having community WMS beds in our city will help people who did not have options before.”

With the introduction of eight WMS beds at the Transitional Housing Stabilization Centre, set to open in the Summer of 2020, individuals will receive judgment-free treatment and wrap-around services to help stabilize and encourage them to seek further addictions treatment. An additional eight beds will be specific for police referrals, allowing these individuals to be diverted from the justice system and emergency room, while receiving medical supports and wrap-around services.

Known as Needs-Based Planning for Substance Abuse Services, the data and methodology used to assess our residential treatment, community WMS, and addictions day/evening program capacity is an internationally recognized approach. Nipissing District was one of six pilot sites across Canada to take part in this ground-breaking study completed in January 2019. In December 2019, the Auditor General of Ontario, in her annual report, recommended a Needs-Based Planning methodology be used for all new and existing addictions programming in Ontario.

“We are very proud with the work accomplished at the Mayor’s Roundtable. The improvements that we are making will make a huge difference in lives of individuals suffering from addictions, their families and the community,” states Mary Davis, Co-Chair of the Mayor’s Roundtable.

The Mayor’s Roundtable Action Team includes representatives from Nipissing Mental Health and Housing, North Bay Recovery Home, Community Counselling Centre of Nipissing, The Crisis Centre, District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board, North Bay Police Services, AIDS Committee, North Bay Regional Health Centre, City of North Bay, People for Equal Partnership, the North Bay and Parry Sound District Health Unit, and HANDS-the Family Help Network

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